# BERESFORD ISLAND ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:

Date:

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# BERESFORD ISLAND ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
## Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. **Beresford Island Ecological Reserve is closed to the public to protect the nesting birds and their habitat.**

### Primary Role

The **primary** role of Beresford Island Ecological Reserve is to protect internationally important nesting sites and terrestrial habitat for breeding birds, many of which are rare and endangered. Together with Triangle Island Ecological Reserve and Sartine Island Ecological Reserve, it represents the most important seabird area in Pacific Canada. This highly productive marine region off the northern tip of Vancouver Island is home to an estimated 55% of the world's population of Cassin's auklet. Other migratory seabirds, including tufted puffins, glaucous-winged gulls, pelagic cormorants, black oystercatchers, pigeon guillemots, petrels, albatross and shearwaters utilize the area for critical breeding, nesting, and marine foraging habitat. Given the sensitive nature of seabird nesting sites, this ecological reserve has been closed to the public.

In addition to being important to seabirds, the island supports an endemic race of deer mouse and haul-out sites for the endangered northern sea lion.

### Secondary Role

The **secondary** role is to protect special natural values and features. Extreme weather conditions, isolation, and the physical environment have created an environment that supports plant communities which are both unique in composition and expression. Of the three outermost islands in the Scott Islands Group, Beresford is the only one which supports trees. These are old Sitka spruce, twisted by the elements. Red elderberry and black twinberry are the dominant shrubs, and tufted hairgrass is the most widespread herb. The blue-listed plant hairy goldfields is found in the ecological reserve, which is one of only 6 known occurrences in British Columbia. This plant is unique in that it requires rocky coastal cliffs in the lowland zone (Coastal Western Hemlock vh1), often nitrified from guano deposits and it is rare in southwest British Columbia.

Beresford Island contributes to the representation of the Vancouver Island Shelf *Terrestrial* Ecosection (VIS) which between Sartine, Beresford, Triangle, Lanz and Cox islands (collectively known as the Scott Islands), is almost entirely protected. These islands also contribute to the protection of the Vancouver Island Shelf *Marine* Ecosection (VIS), which is poorly represented in the protected areas system at 5.4%.

### Management Issues

No known management issues at this time.

## Conservation

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| Representation<br>- ecosection | ☐ | Beresford Island Ecological Reserve makes a minimal contribution (0.69%) to the representation of the Vancouver Island Shelf *Terrestrial* Ecosection (VIS). This ecosection is almost entirely protected (99.66%) by 7 protected areas. Lanz and Cox Islands Park is the major contributor (91.28%).<br><br>Beresford Island is part of the Scott Islands Group which has a total of 4,076 hectares of foreshore. The Scott Islands are the 4th largest contributor out of 28 protected areas to the representation of the Vancouver Island Shelf *Marine* Ecosection, which has only 5.39% protected provincially. |
| - biogeoclimatic subzone/variant | ☐ | Beresford Island Ecological Reserve makes a very minimal contribution (0.02%) to the representation of the CWHvh1, which is well represented in the province at 19.3%. |
| Special Feature | ☒ | Unique plant communities, seabird colonies, sea lions, endemic deer mouse. |
| Rare/Endangered Values | ☒ | *Red-listed species:* northern sea lion. *Blue-listed species:* Peale's peregrine falcon; Cassin's auklet; tufted puffin; hairy goldfields. *Yellow-listed species of conservation concern (S4):* Leach's storm petrel; fork-tailed storm petrel; pelagic cormorant; bald eagle; and black oystercatcher. *COSEWIC-listed Threatened:* Northern abalone. |
| Scientific/Research Opportunities | ☒ | Breeding birds/sea lions |

## Recreation

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| Representation | | |
| backcountry | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| destination | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| travel corridor | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| local recreation | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| Special Opportunities | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| Education/Interpretation Opportunities | ☒ | Breeding birds – offsite |

## Cultural Heritage

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| Representation | ☐ | Values unknown |

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| Special Feature | ☐ | None known at this time |

**Other Management Considerations**

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| Other Designations | ☒ | Important Bird Area (International program that identifies and supports the protection of lands having special bird habitats); potential Marine Protected Area with federal-provincial partnership. |
| Relationship to other PAs | ☒ | Part of a system of protected areas focused on bird breeding areas on the west coast of British Columbia. Part of the Scott Island Group. |
| Co-operative Management Arrangements | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| Partnerships | ☐ | Not Applicable |
| Vulnerability | ☒ | Susceptible to oil spills, disturbance from boats and planes, feral rabbits, invasive species, offshore drilling, possible shipwrecks and the subsequent introduction of rats. A natural threat is the possibility of a tsunami given the geographical location. |
| Relationship to other Strategies | ☒ | Canadian Wildlife Service is undertaking a Marine Wildlife Area planning process to protect the foraging area of the seabirds. Part of the Marine Protected Areas Strategy. |

**Area**: 425 hectares (13 ha upland; 412 ha foreshore)

**Date of establishment**: May 4, 1971. The foreshore component was added in 1995.